the Magnificat
Andreas
Gripp

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The Magnificat

Andreas Gripp

Beliveau Books

The Magnificat
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Digital Edition

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Published by Beliveau Books, Essex County

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Text font is Palatino Linotype 12pt.
Front Cover Image: Otto Leyde
Interior Photos: RF Images
Proofreader: Carrie Lee Connel

Printed in Canada by Lulu Press

Dépôt Légal / Legal Deposit: Bibliothèque et Archives Canada / Library and Archives Canada, 2026

ISBN 978-1-927734-72-8

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Robson, Professor of English

My prof has graded
my love poem with an F.
Adding a little minus
just to cauterize the wound.
You need to write of red
without its metaphor for blood.
It was a simple
rope of ribbon, stuccoed
to the ceiling when she left.
A belt I knotted
destined for my denims.

Note the sag &
bag of jeans. That stupid Keto
diet did me in. Not the
too-despaired-to-eat.
The rib cage that arises
with the fluxing of
the flesh
has *nothing to do with love.*

I think my prof's
led a sheltered life. Has never
eyed a child interred

in Anishinabek ground.
The wail of a West
Bank widow to the wind.
What would-have-been
Trayvon's birthday if
the gun had thought him
white. *None of this is love.*

His sinistral
has been ringless
all his life. Never had to tug
his wedding band. Bathe
it under water so his
finger finds its breath.
Love will find
a million ways to choke.

What saves you from
the ledge can also sway
you back & forth.
No one blames the chair—
it's what held you up.
The only lee of love
we kick away.

On the Inefficacy of Worship

Deity is forever *above* us.
Yahweh & Allah,
Jehovah's triune face,
the path of Zeus and Brahma,
souped amid the ocean's
doppelgänger.
The sun and moon the
first to grace our incense.

I tell you *gravity*
must be God—
with its power to imprison,
pulling down our missiles,
every feathered wing
that comes in pairs.

Then the satellites
stuck in orbit—fated to
flame & plunge.
And Earth is
but a trifling.

Long ago we trembled

if an asteroid
had been yanked from
outer space—smashing
like a boulder into brick—
a *palace* left still standing
albeit scarred.

We've crowned our would-be
kings, called Tyrannosaurus
Rex. But consider he was felled—
by that which had been
slayed by magnetic
attraction.

For even *Sol*
is forced to round
a galactic navel—
engrossed by its whirl of
veils. And our star is a
jealous idol, scorching
every mortal
drawing near.

The Catholics
carry Mary
heedfully—

lest they *trip*
upon the pavement—
her statue to be strewn
in Virgin blue. Deeper than the
skies. And there's nothing
more unpleasant than
a woman who's been disdained—
inadvertently or not.

I think of the scorner's
plight: falling to his knees,
the fear he feels
as her umbra
scales the walls, emerging
from the pit with
all its fury.

The Vice

The planet was his trope:

A forest fire
happens when
the Earth quaffs
cigarettes. We've birthed
incessant stress. Quakes are
but the spasm
of withdrawal.

Grandpa puffed on
Camels by the carton.
I pondered where
their second hump had gone.
The tar washed down with
vodka like the plume of
sawed-off logs. Focus on the
flume—the forlorn polar
bear, its chill upon a
berg that's gone afloat—cut
off from the others—
and you wonder why it drinks.

His daughter snorted coke
because it's white. A snow
that wouldn't thaw
along her desk. Inhaling
endless winter. The solstice
never fled—
deflowered and benumbed.

If the fog is merely
a nimbus
come to visit, what dependence
shall we proffer
when the sun begins to strike
its heady match? The brume
ablaze too soon—before we've
solved its riddle—a saint
above a pyre
wet as dew, a queer
accelerant—why flesh is so
exorbitantly
consumed,
exalted once its wisps
ascend the sky
like squandered prayer.

Forgive me. The pellucid
became opaque.
A veil must not
lay bare her many secrets.

The Deviant

The day before you
die there's nothing to lose.
Not even that
which channels seed.
Everything's un-
shielded in the end.
There's a reason
eyes & ears
will come in twos—
even the breasts
you never had
but always wanted.
When they *what about*
the nose, talk on the
duality of its tunnels.
Inhaling
& exhaling
but in tandem.

The day before you
die you'll cut your
laundry card in half.
Leave your hamper
to the mice.

You'll saunter
on the speedway
in the cool of your
deathday suit. Yes,
you've read that right.
Morticians have witnessed
worse. What is nakedness
juxtaposed—

with those who waste
a perfectly good Armani? *After*
they've been bludgeoned
and their casket's
primed to close.

The day before you
die is like a starling—

left with a single
wing. Leaping
off its bough
to see what happens.
If the wind can-
not be trusted then who can?
The breath of God must come
with expectations.

Of course I have digressed.

The day before you
die you'll write a poem
about the day before you
die. Everyone will think
it's for your mother.
Until they shudder
at the coitus. Your apparent
aberration.

What's the simile
for a simile? Why does
it look like *smile?*
Google Google's
goo-goo face. Tell
me that is human.

On the day that
you're to die,
you'll scrawl Madonna's
Magnificat. Not *that*
one, the other.

Ascending like a
prayer. To a virgin
who's been fondled
for the very first time.
If you're unsure of
who is whom, read
the strophe again.
Maybe it's the *last.*

Goodbyes can be sexy.
A sunset into ocean
isn't as chaste as
it may look. We moan
in copulation. Also
when in pain. Throbbing
works both ways. That
rap upon your window
from the neighbour—
assuming love & woe will
differ when we bleed.

Vessels

It takes 25 tomatoes
to make a single
bottle of ketchup

—the Internet

Coffee gets the credit
in the morning. There's none
to write of the cup
that's keeping caffeine in
its place—enduring a *thousand-*
plus degrees in every kiln.
Its *oh well* if you break it.
A pitiful recompense.

Ditto for the glory
of Bordeaux.
A barrel's just a keg
for wine & powder.
As if the wood had
nothing better to do.
Like be a cathedral
for the cuckoo. Or a
perch for every owl

resting talons. Nesting
with her eggs.
It's the *yolk* that
we remember. Shells
are but some cracked and
sticky shards.
Forlorn like a womb
which fed & nurtured.

The crockpot
in the kitchen
is lucky to get a bath.
We give it nothing else.
It simmers our many pleasures,
when taste will bleed together.
Our bowls will carry its
blend of Irish stew.

I ask you *why*
do they get the
laurels—the Irish, I mean.
Did they cradle
the spuds & carrots
in their palms?

Rock the mutton
in their arms
while still a lamb?

Our spoons were made in
Dublin.

Exactly *who* are you to
spoil my would-be ode?
Why didn't Yeats &
Heaney offer praise
where it was due?
If you're unable to scribe
a sonnet—on the
bottle that's been barren for
a year—then what do you
know of love or letting go?
How will you build a
schooner for your son?
Explain it other than magic?
How it sailed the tapered
throat despite its skipper
being sotted at the wheel—

from fifteen-hundred
grapes shoved through his
wowed, astonished mouth.

Titan

When I was a kid,
there were only 10 or
11 moons—
orbiting my
favourite planet.

Now there's two-hundred &
seventy-four.
Somehow it's less
romantic.

I'd rather circle
Saturn than our star.
You assume it's
for the rings. Everyone
loves the rings. I counter
basketball—the Wilson
frozen halfway through
the rim, allowing me to
savour the final bucket
that wins the game.

But in case you
don't believe me,

I'll say it's
the way the 8-ball slowly
sinks in the centre pocket—
the *agony* of your victory;
the thrill of my defeat.

Both of these are
lies, of course.
I'm simply misanthropic.
Prefer to gasp on Titan
than inhale our toxic stew.

Soup, you say between
your slurps of minestrone—
as though it makes a difference.
As if Nonna's furtive recipe
could *possibly* keep me here.
The balm within
the oven—her bread that bloats
like a Tilly—
light enough to hoist
me over Earth,

utterly trouncing Verne
& his silly balloon,

weaving me through the
belt of asteroids,

lest I possibly
change my mind,
her loaf to lap the drops
I've clumsily spilt
beyond the bowl,
like a boy still in a bib,

thinking he can one
day flee the sight of
a lonesome moon, the bland &
bandless sky through
which it circles, half its
blemished visage
turned away.

The Peace Pendant,
or Psalm for Augustus

It jounces on
your breastbone
while you dig.
Fettered to your neck
& all its sweat.

We only consider the
headstand of the line within
the wheel. Never
note the space
that's pieced in four.

Our hand had said it first:
bearing the spreading
V. Five or Pax Romana.
Every *Caesar* has his
Christ he puts to death.
And each *utopia*—
sentinels on its border.

Circles have no birth.
Nowhere you can point to
as their finish. Just like
all our wars.

The shot
in Sarajevo? *Forever*
toppling dominoes
to this day.

Do not give me numbers
give me names. In every
script and tongue
that's ever been. Furrowed
into granite
like the burrow of a
spade in yielding earth.

If the dove is a sign of peace,
where are its *battle* scars? Where
the loss of feathers from
its snatch of twig & leaf?
The fractured wing it nurses,
the cost of olive's flight?

How do we know it
sprouted while it lived?

And what of the ascending
sapling—which gave its
budding finger to the air?
What of the *worms*—
which nourished
boundless roots?
The ones we step on
daily, heedless to their writhes
that scream *we suffer.*

Haggling at the Pool of Siloam

You say you'd trade your
sight for a pair of wings.
Writing *pair* is so redundant.
Only a dolt
would barter vision for
a single pinion.

What benefit is
flight—if you *can't*
make heads or tails of
nature's visage?

Flip a coin
unto the heavens.
Accept what isn't yours has
landed prostrate in
the dirt.

If you'd been
blind from birth, we never
would have met—
at the screening of
King of Kings.

You say it's not
the case. The deafening of your
slouch in front-row-centre,
to absorb as much of
Galilee as you can. Every lily-
of-the-field. Sigh of
priest and beggar. My munch of
buttered popcorn
right behind you—my bag a
grating rustle
from the moment the
spotlights dim.

You add you would've
jerked in my direction,
rebuked me for not saving it
for the birds, then suggested
I can buy it by the bucket,
let the swallows
swoop on down at
speeds of sound.

What is worth beholding?

A lonely old bloke
on a bench? Squirrels that
can surmise his
pitch of kernels? If you've ever
witnessed *one*
you've viewed them all—

people, you mean. We only
love divergence
when our vision's up &
gone; our auricles
duly commence
their double-duty—
their remittance
twice as much.

If a breath
into my concha
isn't love, what is?
Orbs can only roll; squint
at Sun's resplendence—
that will mask your
world in seconds if you
look it in the face,

will cause you to
rely on touch & scent, the steps
of a promised prophet
who is plowing
through the crowd to
mud your eyes.

Embryonics, or The Prophet

An acorn in the ocean
doesn't sprout. I only say it
once you've flung
it from the shore—like a bottle
with a missive
yet conceived—thinking a tree
could never rise
up from the sand.

Which is the preferable
death? Being stomped on by a
child's fleeing heel?
Left in a stranded castle
awaiting waves?
Everything's tsunami
when you're small.

You'll say *potential*
opted to float its years
away. The sanctity of
seed. Something that the
seagulls leave alone.

I wonder if it's *you*
of whom you speak.
You with your desert
womb. Setting it a sail—

like baby Moses
in a basket
by the reeds.
One day to be
struck by the sight of God;

countenance aflame,
a chisel in need of
stone, declaring what is holy
and what is not.

Rescuing Sylvester

I've heard the fire
department
will no longer salvage
felines stuck in trees.
If they can climb
up, they can climb
down.

It's more gruelling to descend.
Ask the cat that's scaled
the summit of a pole,
mistaking it for a
maple because of the
birds.

You'll weary from
his meows. Do the job *yourself*
without a ladder—
the one that feigns
it's a stairway to
the heavens—
looking downward from
the T of rugged wood,

encircled at its base
by mocking neighbours,
hearing *come down from the*
cross and we'll believe.

Sylvester will sink his paws
into your shoulder till
it bleeds, though you'll carry
his err & fear, weep at the
insouciance of the
winged, who chatter on
the lines like they always
do—like *we* will always do—

regardless of afflictions
in our grasp, callous
like the ship that's hauling
salt, sailing past the drowning
in indifference,
fulfilling its solemn
duty as a saviour
invariably must.

Succubus

Even as a child,
you never feared the night.
It's only the birl of
the Earth.

The rats that clawed
the walls? You left them
Camembert, Shiraz
to wash it down.
Cognac for the spiders.
Oysters for
each Geist or
pretzeled snake.

You stood upon your
head in tilt-a-whirls,
watched The Exorcist
at midnight, conjured
Latin lyrics for
Tubular Bells.

I'm not afraid of the
dark. It's afraid of me.

You likened every
goth to Daisy Mae,
got a tattoo on your
tongue in order to
know how it would taste;
swapping *floss* for
exacto blades,
laughing that *it tickles.*

And there will come
a gloom in which I reach
out for your imprint on
the bed, not from living
flesh but from your flailing
silhouette, the kind that
filled the room,

whenever I scratched a
match to see what even
the ogres dread.

The Wino

My every chug of wine
is utterly *medicinal.*

I accept you won't
believe me. I wouldn't buy it either.
What I *will* buy
comes swathed in a paper bag—
sheltered by the progeny
of the *woodland.*
If trees confer their blessing,
who am I to differ?

I'll be completely candid—
it doesn't cure what ails me. I will
still be limping to
the door when FedEx
beckons. Mourn my mother's
rot. Kvetch when I am
worming out of bed.
Oy vey is just a cultural
annexation—too good to
leave absconded.

I will caterwaul its merits
as I belt some Caballé,
from Pinot to Chianti;
share the sagacity of
the vine—how it's wiser
as it ages, like a monk
on a mountain-
top; the interconnected-
ness of stems—a model of the
brain amid the branches.
Green & purple pearls
are simply protons.
Worlds of a higher whole.
Every blinding star
submits to shadow. An
eclipse is but their kiss.

If it were not so then
Christ would not have
waved His heavenly hand,
morphing Evian to Merlot.
Welch's wouldn't cut it.

And if *He* were lacking
insight, I doubt you'd sing
cantatas every Sunday,
witness miracles of trans-
mutation.

The fact you're
Episcopalian
says it all. Forgiveness from the
grape in lieu of flesh. But blood can
be sublime.

Heed my altar call.
Sip it again for
the very first time. Then quaff
it on your knees. Gulp it to
the marrow, till you succumb
to its vintage spell. Even mystery
spills its guts when it is drunk.

the reason you no longer take
me to catch some jazz

It distorts my observations:
The trumpet's blow is *out*
and never *in.* Antonym
to our ears. Its funnel like a
mouth unwilling to listen.
Canals are a one-way route.

I wonder why the drums
don't have a migraine. Even
with Art Blakey
on the kit. Even when the
cymbals send out
sonar like the bats.

I'm always talking baseball.
Before it went electric.
Charlie Mingus
homered in the single
time he swung. He made
more money *then*
than in a decade's
worth of stand-up. I'm talking
the bass he played—
not the comedy.

I heard he caught
the biggest one on record,
there in the Hudson River,
someone junking the
wood but not the wire.
Why would you *presume*
I speak of fish?

Diamonds never float.
Ask the southpaw
if you will. There
on the tenor sax
between his breaths.
He moonlights
although *neither*
bring him cash.
The squall is not from
rage despite his race.
The one he finished last
though he was first
like Jesus said.
Everything was running
but his skin.

He'll tell
you *Black is beauty*
without words. In the
grinding of his teeth.
His pitch
from a latent tongue.

The Blade

Those who take up the sword
shall perish by the sword.
—Matthew 26:52

Sword must be the mightiest
word in the world. See it for
yourself: *word* is already contained,
its double-
daggered w
left unsaid, mistaken
for a pair of muted v—
fleet-footed samurai
set to slice;
on tiptoes like the shrouded
a in stealth.

It's the hero's
weapon of choice—
unsheathed in half-a-second—
the honour that it brings, a rod
for Thorian bolts, epitome
of Herculean effort.

Conan was its servant
not its master. Nothing else
can knight you on the shoulders.
Not an AK-47.
Not the atom bomb.
And surely not a Molotov—
its bearer fleeing the battle
once it's tossed.

It's the poster boy for
knives; something they aspire to
whenever their drawer is pulled.
It will help you in a pinch;
cut that brick of butter
that's been sitting in the
fridge since olden days.
Silverware have winced
from golden auras—a smooth,
deceptive texture;
feigning they're too spotty
to do the trick.

The sword *itself*
can never be surrender's cause.
It knows no cowardice.

When it's thrown onto the
ground in acquiescence,
it repudiates the fingers
which concede, always unforgiving;
vengeful to the bone.
It does more than
simply wound. It severs the
brain from body. The body
from the soul. Takes our proud
identity away.

It's just in its show
of mercy. Merciless
when it's just. It will invade
and/or defend. It even serves to
splice the conjugations.
Unyielding Excalibur.
Few are worthy to wield.

It's our past and it's our
future. Willing to *adapt*
if it must. Alight in the
hands of Kenobi. Aflame
with Joan of Arc.

Forged when war arrives
& it always will.

The sword can take a punch—
pounded on an anvil
in a blaze, till it blinds us
like the sun. Its deafening,
immutable roar, as though a
mother giving birth
in archaic times.

We are all its sons.
We are all its daughters.
It's twin-edged for a reason,
honed in its locution.
Its language is its
glory. It harbours the gift of
tongues. We know exactly
what it says when
it disrobes, recoiling from
its naked retribution.

The Wilt

You say I have a
yellow thumb. *Our*
ferns are over-quenched.
Adding we should nurture
succulents: *they never*
ask for more than what
is needed.

I've shrivelled from
your bellicose tropes:
the beach doesn't need
the waves
to be a beach. That merely the
grains suffice, and
you long for Kalahari:
sand is not a desolate
place.

You've left me parched &
wanting, a single
drop enduring in the
craw of my canteen,
preferring a snake's
maraca

to the *rattle* of a baby's
toy we bought for nothing.

You're enamoured with *el*
amor—the needles
of a cactus misconstrued—
caress them from the bottom,
like the ever-wary
thorns;

that when we love things as
we should, we'll grasp that it's
the *petals* which cut to the quick;
why my dozen, darling roses
have been standing on
their heads—sadhakas
holding breath in
stagnant water—

your hands without a
scratch. And why
would I deduce they're topsy-
turvy, that blood
must pay the toll for
your devotion?

The Ruse of Mild Air

In this warmer than normal winter,
the trees are budding early—
in February's
rain instead of snow.

I feel I ought to go outside
and *bring* some soothing tea,
play a tranquil song
for harp and strings,

be the sandman for a spell,
send the rousing leaves-to-be
back into their shells,

lest the winds return from the north,
puddles freeze over,
and greening branches waken
to a birdless lie of ice.

Intercessions

Fog is a poor
man's cloud. Stumbling
in the fall from
which we sprung.
I speak of the impoverished,
not the mist that shrouds
their steps.

The pond is the
poor man's ocean.
Watch him skipping
stones along its rim.
Triune in their bounce.

Rocks are a poor
man's mountain. Bits of a
broken soul.

Why the laurels for
the summit? The climbing *up*
applauded? No one takes
the time to view *descent,*
to measure
beneath the base.
None who plant a pennant
at its feet.

We seldom speak in
meters for the damned.
The child at the
bottom of the well.
His every gaze aloft as
if to God.
Drenched inside his
ears by water's lift.

We only bow our heads
to shut our eyes; teach
that prayer *ascends*
just like the fumes from
every lorry. Never *burrows*
as a mole
beneath our steps—
content in ever-blindness.

Pick it quickly, now.
The sense to *see*
or *hear.* Music
lost in one. Her face
when all is veiled.

Or select the taste of
touch. We submerge our
dead in dirt—say they're off
to some Valhalla
in the sun.

To shovel is to worship.
Feel it for yourself in
loamy soil. There's a reason
every swine will
lurch in mud. Toss to them
your pearls. Or place
them back in oysters
for safe-keeping. If the ocean's
scaled in fathoms, why should
all the Numen
live in skies, spurn
their own Messiahs,

take away our gills?
Choking like a fish
that drinks the air.

Immortality, or
Farewell, St. Sebastian

For some it's
progeny. For others, the
house they built. An Oscar
on their mantel or a painting
in the Louvre. For me a
book of scribbles. My pulse in
the pith of psalm.

My friend in second
grade wrote *Dave was here.*
Using the teacher's
indelible marker.

If you'd asked him at
the time it was enough.

Inheritance

The meek shall inherit the
Earth or so I've heard.

Humans aren't meek—so it
definitely
ain't gonna be us.

Maybe it's why
the Son of God
had said it. We lose our
humility—the very *second*
we think we've snagged it.

I reckon He spoke of
horses—bringing us
to and fro like a humble
rickshaw. Or hauling us
in a carriage
round the park—no place
that is private
for relief—a shovel to
scoop the mess,
couples seeing nothing
but their ass.

The jockey bags the
money not the steed.
It's the knight
considered gallant
and scores the joust;
the sheriff
not the stallion
gaining glory.
An apple is a piss-
poor prize: "here,
bake your *own*
fucking pie."

Whinny rhymes with
ninny. Its neigh
that goes with sleigh at
Christmas time.
Even Santa
passed them over
for the antlered.

But the Day will come
when all will call them
Equus.

None which bear
a saddle, none to feel
the spur, bridles burned
by nostrils spouting flame—

though *Eeyore*
would like a word—
his countenance
ever-bowed. He'll say a
donkey uplifted *Christ*
in a sea of palms; while even
the ponies snickered, the camels
snubbed its tail—
someday to be used in a
child's game—for such
is the Kingdom of God.

3.14 and counting

A million years from
now, none of this will
matter. I mean this *poem*
& all the others. Not you,
my paramour—though unless
you make the chronicles
of Terra,
painted like Da Vinci,
sculpted like Rodin,
sung like Etta James—
you'll be nothing but
dust to dust.

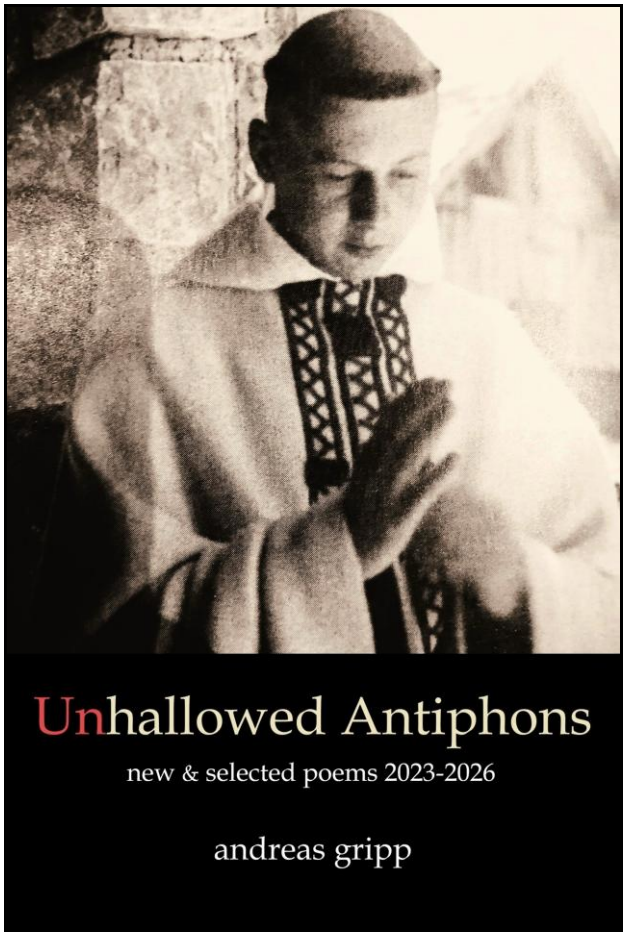
So why am I sketching
the pupils of your eyes?
Swelling like a tumour when
you're scared, while you tumble
down in unrequited love?

Why add pigments
to your hair, creases round
your mouth as though
you've laughed your life away?

There is nothing
that is funny
when we're gone. Except
perhaps that joke about the
snake & thirty rabbits.
Something about the eggs
placed out of reach.
The congealing of the yolk.
Why we spell it with
a letter never heard.
That it's always been the
shell that everyone wants.
The profundity of its cracks.

No. Cross that. The water in
which it boils. Its sextillion
molecules. That its number
has nothing to do
with copulation. That it
rhymes with population.
That *less & more* are less.
None left to un-
earth the end of Pi;
why we feigned it
meant a thing.

Visit Andreas at his website:
andreasgripp.wixsite.com/andreasgripp



Andreas Gripp was born and raised in Treaty 6 Territory (London, Ontario) and in 2024 moved to Leamington with his wife, Carrie. He's the author of over 40 books of poetry, including *Someday She'll Adore You*, *Give Us This Day*, and *Unhallowed Antiphons*. His poems have been lauded for their lyrical and literary merit, accessibility, and for their blend of comic and poignant storytelling.

Beliveau Books
ISBN 978-1-927734-72-8 $10